



PROCELLARIA GIGANTEA, *Gmel.*

Giant Petrel.

Procellaria gigantea, Gmel. Edit. of Linn. Syst. Nat., vol. i. p. 563.—Lath. Ind. Orn., vol. ii. p. 820.—List of Birds in Brit. Mus. Coll., part iii. p. 162.—Less. Traité d'Orn., p. 611.

Mother Cary's Goose, Cook's Voy., vol. ii. p. 205.

Giant Petrel, Lath. Gen. Syn., vol. vi. p. 396. pl. 100.—Penn. Arct. Zool., vol. ii. Supp., p. 71.—Cook's Last Voy., vol. ii. pp. 229 & 258.—Lath. Gen. Hist., vol. x. p. 170. pl. clxxvi.

As is the case with several other species of the *Procellariidæ*, this, the largest member of the family, is universally distributed over all the temperate and high southern latitudes: and that it frequently performs the circuit of the globe may, I think, be fairly inferred from the circumstance of an albino variety having followed the vessel for three weeks while we were running down our longitude between the Cape of Good Hope and Van Diemen's Land, the ship often making nearly two hundred miles during the twenty-four hours; it must not, however, be understood that the bird was merely following the vessel's speed, nor deemed incredible when I state that during the twenty-four hours it must have performed the enormous distance of nearly two thousand miles, since it was only at intervals of perhaps half an hour that it was seen, hunting up the wake of the vessel for the distance of a mile to secure any offal, &c. that had been thrown overboard, the interim being employed in scanning the ocean in immense circles of at least twenty miles, at a speed of eighty or a hundred miles an hour.

Its flight is not so easy, graceful and buoyant as that of the Albatros, but is of a more laboured and flapping character; the bird is also of a more shy disposition, and never approaches so near the vessel as the other members of the family; while flying, its white bill shows very conspicuously.

On visiting Recherche Bay in D'Entrecasteaux' Channel, Van Diemen's Land, I found thousands of this species sitting together on the water and feeding on the blubber and other refuse of the whaling station. I did not observe the bird between Sydney and New Zealand, but on arriving in lat. 50° S., long. 90° W., nearly off Cape Horn, a solitary wanderer flew about the ship; and in lat. 41° S., long. 34° W., a few were still seen in pairs. Captain Cook found it very abundant on Christmas Island, Kerguelen's Land, in December, when it was so tame that his sailors knocked it down with sticks.

The adults have the entire plumage of a dark chocolate-brown; bill light horn-colour, the tip tinged with vinous; irides dark blackish brown; legs blackish brown.

The young of the year, besides being much lighter in colour, have the eye of a silvery white interspersed with markings resembling network.

The Plate represents the bird about two-thirds of the natural size.